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The Spirit

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Brooklyn, NY

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SJC Alum Teaching at 100 Years Old

Constance Lowe

The class of '35 is still going strong.

For Madeline Scotto, a dedicated elementary school math teacher who, despite turning 100 this year, is still teaching at Saint Ephrem's Elementary School in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. On her sixth decade of teaching, there are no plans to retire. She recoiled at the mention of the subject saying, "Some people like what they're doing but I have a passion for what I'm doing, and when you have a passion for something, you never give up."

Mrs. Scotto's tenacity applies to the students when she tutors for the school's math bee. She pushes her young pupils to always work hard. Within her community, she is called a miracle worker for helping thousands of students navigate the "wilderness of mathematics."

"I never think of a child as, 'He was a winner, he was a loser,'" she says, "I'm happy with you if you've just done your best. I don't baby anybody-- I never babied my own-- but I think they know I'm sincerely interested in them doing their best." Scotto has five children, who themselves are mostly retired, nine grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Despite her age, she doesn't consider herself a "senior citizen." She doesn't belong to any senior clubs. "They're like a different breed of people," she said, adding that being in the school keeps her young.

Another activity keeping Mrs. Scotto grounded staying in touch with current events. An avid New York Times reader, she remarked, "Obama has a job I do not relish," and on the subject of the media said, "I am not deliriously happy with television lately-- too much advertisements."

Her secrets to longevity are relatively simple ones: eat well, stay active, be frugal, don't worry too much. "I work hard, I pray hard, and I'm happy," she says. "All the people around me make me happy."

WHY THE HILL CENTER IS NOT OPEN

THE SPIRIT EDITORIAL BOARD

Photo Credit: Jessica Jacolbe

The Hill Center, located on Vanderbilt Avenue, is still not open despite its finished exterior.

It would not be fair of us to blame one single person as responsible for the status of the Hill Center, the new SJC athletic facility that stands silent on Vanderbilt Avenue. There are a group of people who are at fault in this unfortunate situation. This building cost $15 million to build, and yet the contractor, architect, and whoever else participated in the project were still not able to get the construction correct the first time.

There have been a series of inspections conducted to examine if the building is up to code. When the Hill Center failed inspection during the week of November 3, 2014, changes had to be made around the fitness center, where certain sections of glass in the hallway had to be removed. The architect of the building, Paul Bentel, who has designed SJC buildings on the Patchogue campus, told the Spirit in an exclusive interview that minor changes were made right away. As of November 18, 2014, another code consultant has visited the building; the results of this inspection were still pending as of November 19th.

SJC Chief Financial Officer John Roth, who is in charge of buildings and facilities on campus, had expressed frustration to the Spirit earlier in the year concerning the approval of the building. Mr. Bentel echoed these statements by saying, "There is nothing we understand (that is) in our way... other than getting in front of the plan examiner and hav(ing) him say yes." With more revisions to the previously approved drawings, it is taking more time for the Department of Buildings to approve every reconstruction.

None of this changes the fact, though, that before construction began there was a blueprint and project plan in place for the Hill Center. With $15 million being spent on the building, would it have been too much to expect that those plans would correctly follow all standards from the start? With the Hill Center failing inspection after inspection, there have already been several changes to the architect's design. How many more are we looking at, and how many more months and how much more money will be needed to remodel and reconstruct the building to meet code standards?

The communication to the college community on the topic of construction progress (or non-progress, in this case) has been nothing spectacular, either. When we reported online a few weeks back that the Hill Center would be having another inspection many were surprised, including some department heads. There has been a lot of mystery surrounding the building's status. There have been rumors that it would be open in September, October, and even November, but at this point it is unclear if that means November 2014 or November 2015.

There have been many questions posed in this article, and we are not alone in asking them; students and faculty members alike want answers. More importantly, everyone just wants the Hill Center to open as soon as possible.

(For to-the-moment updates as to the status of the Hill Center, be sure to follow @IsSJCGymOpenYet on Twitter.)

Club Spotlight: The Arts

Kristina Hernandez

Chapel Players
President: Kelsey Jenkeleit
Founded: 1917
Mission: Keep Calm and Act On.
Must-Attend Event (Show/Performance/Meeting) for the Year: Spring Musical (TBA)
Email: thoefner@sjcny.edu

Dance Club
President: Jam Marcos Evangelista
Founded: 2005
Mission: The Dance Club offers students interested in the art of dance a chance to learn and perform several different styles of movement. In addition to the learning experience, day and night performances are planned throughout the year, giving members a chance to showcase their pieces.
Must-Attend Event: Dance Concert on November 20 - 21, 2014
Email: Stemple@sjcny.edu

Writer's Workshop
President: Tim Dillon
Founded: 2010
Mission: To write on!
Email: tdillon2@student.sjcny.edu

Robert Napolitano

Still from a Dance Club performance in April 2014

Word Around Campus: Where do you go around campus during Common Hour?

Preshina Pramee

Business '15

So I'm usually at the library because I have work to do, but in the odd time that I don't, I'm usually at Fort Greene Park. If I bring my workout clothes with me, I go for a run in between classes. I have so much time between classes. So, it's the only time that I can workout.

Aura German

Mathematics '18

Most of the time, I spend it in the cafeteria with friends or I'll be in the library. Also, if there's an event I'll definitely go to Tuohy Hall. If I go out, I'll go to get food and come back here because there's not much to do outside. I probably just go to Subway.

Kelsey Jenkeleit

Child Study '15

I'm never here except for class. I don't know if that's an answer. I usually just get to class, and I'm either at the library or in class. Seniors are hard to survey.

Marco Diaz

Biology '16

On campus during my free time in the day, I do my homework. In the afternoon, I just chill. I'm in the cafeteria or "Red Room," but it really just depends where all my friends are.

Erin Collins

Communication Studies '15

I plan to go to cool places around the neighborhood, but then I get lazy and just wind up paying for an overpriced wrap at Evodio's. Then usually troll the school looking for friends. There's only so many places they can be...student lounge, cafeteria, library, etc.

Honors Students Canoe in One of USA's Most Polluted Waterways

Victoria Benalcazar

The North Brooklyn Boat Club, located in the Greenpoint/Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, is dedicated to the study and preservation of wildlife on Newtown Creek, a 3.8 mile long natural tributary of the East River. Founded in 2010, the NBBC provides citizens with the opportunity to paddle themselves along this creek in order to enjoy the wide open spaces while appreciating the efforts that go into transforming this area into a more suitable living environment for the creatures that call it home.

On Friday, September 19th, Honors freshman students at St. Joseph's College participated in this event as a requirement for their SJC 100H class. It was also available on Friday, October 10th, for all Honors students at the college. Students sat in the "Ed Shed," an on-site educational room where people can learn about the history of the creek and the environmental efforts of the NBBC.

Some spots had a pH level equal to that of household ammonia.

Beginning with the Dutch in the 1600's, settlements were built along Newtown Creek. People coexisted peacefully with the nature surrounding them. Then in the mid-19th century, it became a major industrial waterway. Factories sprung up along its borders, and with factories came pollution. The city began to dump raw sewage into the creek, which killed off most of the wildlife living in the area. Since then there have been multiple oil spills, including the Greenpoint Oil Spill of 1978, in which 30 million gallons were emptied into the creek. As a result of all of the waste being dumped into the area, some spots had a pH level equal to that of household ammonia. The creek had become one of the most polluted waterways in the entire nation and could not support the wildlife it had sustained during the time of the Dutch settlements.

In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency designated Newtown Creek as a Superfund Site, meaning that a long-term response would be needed in order to clean up the effects that over a century of pollution had done to the creek. The capping of industrial settlements has contributed to the effort to clean up this waterway. This, along with the efforts of independent environmental organizations, has caused an overall improvement in water quality and a return of many species of birds and sea creatures to their natural habitats.

Students sailed on a "floating classroom," or a 25 foot-long canoe, in which they themselves paddled while observing first-hand the effects that the industrial age had on this natural waterway. They collected water from the creek, and in class they found microscopic marine animals swimming in the water, meaning that the efforts of the NBBC were succeeding. Katie Wenzler, a freshman in the class, was one of the students who went on the trip, and says, "It was my first time canoeing so it was a different experience for me. I enjoyed rowing down the creek and seeing the New York City skyline." This trip is not only a way to observe ongoing environment efforts to restore a sanctuary for wildlife, but it is also one of the ways in which to observe how NYC can incorporate natural beauty into a thriving metropolis.

For more information, visit northbrooklynboatclub.org.

Photo Credit: Robert Napolitano

Cast members of "All in the Timing" take a bow at the end of the performance

REVIEW: All In The Timing

By Bruno Merisier

Words, words, words. It's something people should think about when watching this play. On Friday, October 24, 2014, SJC's Chapel Players performed "All In The Timing", a play themed around the connections people make with words, timing, and social behaviors. The entire performance consisted of six pieces, with each of them holding their own plot. Each piece is as follows: "Sure Thing," "Words, Words, Words," "The Universal Language," "Phillip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread," "The Philadelphia," and "Variations on the Death of Leon Trotsky."

Elliot Sang '17 and Marsha Firmin '17 stole the spotlight with the play's first piece. The humorous parts about this play are when the characters say things so outrageous that they don't even deserve a second chance.

Thomas Rushin '16, Amanda Gillespie '17, and Joanna Bis '17 were featured in the next piece that had you thinking a little more about the setting and who the characters were. In the next part, Brooke Turner plays a character who wants to learn a new language to aid in her speech impediment. She finds a man played by Shujaa Green, who is willing to teach an unusual universal language. The chemistry between both performers was phenomenal.

In "The Philadelphia," Marsha Firmin and Amanda Gillespie starred as male characters at a diner. This one was the most crude in terms of language, which was exciting. The plot was easy to pick up on, and the punchline of the piece was quite humorous.

The final piece, "Variation On the Death of Leon Trotsky," featured Thomas Rushin as Leon Trotsky who contemplates his existence. Out of all the segments, this one was the most intellectual. Ultimately his thoughts were worthless because he was going to die anyway.

The director, Tom Hoefner, who has directed the play once before at the college several years ago, said that re-teaching all the same roles to new students was difficult. He also included that with each new member that joins Chapel Players annually, the play itself changes.

There was definitely a division between the left side and the right side of the auditorium. On the left side, you had mostly parents and teachers and on the right side there were students. At times during the play, one side of the room would burst out laughing while the other side was silent. This was an awkward feeling because it seemed like there was a hidden punchline. I do feel that some of the audience is to blame for this. There were inside jokes that some of the audience understood. Overall the play was presented in a sharp, witty, and humorous way. The performers undoubtedly put much effort into executing every line, unusual encounter, and spontaneous burst of foul language.

Deadpool is the Merc with the Movie

By Daniela Cardinale

The infamous Deadpool is finally getting his movie. Most commonly referred to as the "merc with the mouth" (and boy, does he use it), Deadpool is relatively unknown but is considered one of the more popular Marvel mutant characters linked to both the X-Men and Avengers. The Deadpool character has been featured in an array of comics, TV shows, cartoons, video games, and in one movie so far.

Earlier this year, a leaked test-trailer featuring Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool found its way online and received a tremendous amount of interest now that Fox Studios finally announced that Deadpool would be getting a movie. Finally, I mean, it only took a few months to announce a movie that they've been discussing since 2009. After Ryan Reynolds' less-than-perfect portrayal of Deadpool in "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," it makes comic-people, especially me, question how they will portray Deadpool in his own movie. Known for his raunchy behavior and constant chit-chat, Deadpool is a character that is as entertaining as he is annoying.

Nonetheless, Deadpool is a complex, layered character that many people can relate to because of all the terrible things he has had to endure. Before Deadpool was a mercenary, he was Wade Wilson, an army man battling cancer and searching all over the world for a cure. He's unable to remember the pain and suffering he endured because of the torture he was put through in a medical facility by a doctor who bet on his patients lives, where he received the name. This is the story that they had originally planned on telling in the movie, but because Fox wants to make money, they will be "changing" a few things by making the box-office version PG-13. (There will be an R-rated version that will be released afterwards.)

As excited as I am about this movie even being made, it worries me to think that studios are not willing to take a chance on making a movie based off a character's true story if it's too mature. This is the reason why they have waited so long to announce the movie. Earlier this October, Ryan Reynolds had made several public statements about the film, but he has not made any concrete statements about playing Deadpool. Besides him, no one else has come forward.

With no actual cast or concrete storyline, this movie seems to be running, but in the wrong direction. Fox Studios is set on making this movie so that Deadpool could eventually become a part of the X-Men Universe, but not the Avengers. Though Marvel and Fox have discussed the idea of merging characters into movies some time down the road, they have not been able to come to any agreements because they are unwilling to share the rights of the characters. Though the studios are trying to branch out with characters like Deadpool, they are unable to tell the story in its entirety because of character rights, which will ultimately affect how successful it will be. This is the biggest fear comic-people have with the Deadpool movie: that it will be underappreciated because the studios are not willing to invest in it. As of right now, we can only wait and see what happens as they begin to cast and film the Deadpool movie.

Halloween Decorations of Clinton Avenue: The Best of the Block 2014

By Grace Chamoun

Strolling around campus may give you a scare, for monsters and ghosts are seen everywhere! On Clinton, on Waverly, on Willoughby too, these Halloween decorations will scare the lights out of you! Bears, jerseys, and duffle bags may make you seem tough, but pitchforks and torches aren't even enough! Murderers and ghosts are running awry, you better beware before the Grim Reaper sucks your soul from the sky. At practice for baseball and basketball too, you still can't stop them from getting to you! So listen SJC for this is certainly no joke, these Clinton Hill villains prey on young college folk!

For over two decades, Clinton Hill has held their annual Halloween Walk. Every year, the community organizes an hour and a half long stroll in which parents, children, visitors, witches, Dorothy, ebola nurses, pirates, vampires, mustard and ketchup bottles, and zombies all come together to celebrate the spirit of All Hallows' Eve. In order to add some spice and flare to this 21-year tradition, the residents of the neighborhood have turned their homes and properties into Brooklyn's own Halloweentown.

Although this ritual started out to safely aid the community's children in their quest for cavities, it has evolved and transformed into streets upon streets of haunted houses, ghosts, graveyards, band performances, and even theatrical productions. Two estates in particular, 313 Clinton Avenue and the other taking shelter in the garage of 233 Waverly Ave., dedicate an endless amount of time in order to arrange and prepare for this annual extravaganza.

Building stages and theater sets, investing in audio and lights, hiring make-up artists and costume designers, and recruiting actors and actresses, these Halloween endeavors come at a costly price. The owner of 313 Clinton Avenue, Janna Kennedy, sells t-shirts, totes, costumes, and props in order to fundraise. The owner and organizer of the shows on 233 Waverly Avenue, Robert Trocks, has relied solely on community donations and his own wallet in order to fund his property's production. Although these shows are expensive in time and money, they attract nearly 5,000 audience members yearly. Each Halloween these productions become increasingly more elaborate and are made possible through the collective efforts of volunteers, including producers, writers, artists, and even professional actors. Together, these groups amalgamate their talents and strive to top the performances of the year prior.

Musically, Pam Fleming's Dead Zombie Band always rocks the "stage" (or should I say the sidewalk) of Waverly with their live original spooky music and renditions of some classic Halloween favorites. In commemoration of this bloodcurdling holiday, Pam and her band create a new sound track just for this neighborhood event. The band also uses their property and time to display the works of the Haunted Art Gallery.

This community event has evolved greatly over the years. Robert Trock began his involvement in 2009 inside his garage, and with every passing year has invested more of an effort into designing and organizing this Halloween festivity. Now, his show has a full-blown stage and his and Janna Kennedy's crew run three shows a night every Halloween evening. Halloween 313 has been around for quite a bit longer, celebrating their 20th anniversary this year. To put this in perspective for all of you college kids, their first production took place in October of 1994,the year many of our students were born.

Best Tombstone: "NFL: Not happy simply kicking ass, with other men on gridiron grass. These cowards think they're within their rights, when punching out a woman's lights, or beating children 'til they bleed, 'It's good for them, it's what they need.' When violence goes beyond the game, the NFL should share the blame, if all they do to punish the fist is turn their backs and slap the wrist."

Best Performance: Dead Zombie Band, featuring Pam Fleming on Trumpet and vocals, Lily White and Jenny Hill playing Tenor Sax, Jessica Lurie on Alto Sax, Martha Hyde playing the Soprano Sax, Buford O'Sullivan playing Trombone, Ursel Schlicht and Adam Klipple on Keys, Dave Phelps stringing the Guitar, Leo Traversa and Alan Byers on bass, Todd Isler hitting those Drums, and last but not least, Charles Moore in charge of sound!

Best Theatrics: A tie between Nightmare on Clinton Avenue and the Brooklyn Halloween Show.

Best Sign: Clinton Hell Sanitarium for the Criminally Insane

Photo Credit: Grace Chamoun

8 Things Your Waiter Really Wants You To Know

Lauren Kelly

1) We're judging you... but usually in a positive light. We love fun tables. If you're funny, have a cute baby, or are reasonably attractive then you can bet that we're going to talk about you with our fellow co-workers and let them know how jealous they should be that you're sitting in our section. Also, if you're super needy, pretentious, and/or annoying - please stand up, push your chair in, and leave.

2) Customers who use the phrase "When you get a chance…," bless you. Thank you for acknowledging that we have other tables to attend to and that certain requests are more time-sensitive than others.

3) If it's absolutely necessary for you to leave your phone on the table all night, then please don't place it right next to your glass of water. It's always an uncomfortable moment when we're rushing to refill your water glasses (to attend to more time-sensitive requests) and water splashes over onto your six-hundred dollar iPhone. We live off tips, so we don't have time for that.

4) If you're the last table in the restaurant... leave. It's really that simple. After the end of a long shift, all we want to do is go home, take a shower, and smell like something other than our menu's most popular item, but we can't have that luxury until you leave.

5) If we drop the check and use the words "Whenever you're ready," the "whenever" really means "right now." Usually, this is code for the fact that there are other people waiting for your table. Be considerate of others, especially when they're hungry. Also, the longer people wait to be seated, the less inclined they are to acknowledge ($$$) the good service once they're inside. Please do your part in ending this cycle of destruction.

6) If your electronics need to be charged, it's not our problem! We don't have time to ask the "guys in the back" if they have an extra iPhone 5 charger. Sorry, we're not sorry you're on 5%. Maybe you should try socializing with the people you came to dinner with instead.

7) If you put your name down as a table of four, you better show up as a table of four. Arranging tables is a very delicate science, involving limited resources and fire safety rules that you know nothing about. As excited as we are for you that your BFF's boyfriend changed his mind last minute and decided to come, it is not always as simple as just pulling up an extra chair. These last minute surprises really mess with our zen. Do everyone a favor and call ahead so we can avoid the whole mess.

8) We appreciate you. You don't have to be a millionaire for us to appreciate your generosity. We know that most of you are hard working people just like us. The tip you leave does not wholly define your worth to us. We appreciate your kindness, your sense of humor, and your ability to forgive when we bring you diet Pepsi instead of regular. We appreciate patience. Most of all, we appreciate your stories. The best part of our jobs is getting to know our customers. Some go out to eat to celebrate their amazing accomplishments. Others just to cheer to making it through Monday. We're thankful to be a part of these moments and genuinely want to do everything in our power to make them memorable. Please just don't forget that waiters are people too, and of course we would always love a slice of the double dark chocolate cake you brought from the bakery next door!

Scene from the film, "Dear White People" released October 2014

"Dear White People" Exposes the Media's Racism

Brianna Todman

Recently the movie "Dear White People" came out, and the entire premise is pretty controversial. The satire centers around a group of students attending a primarily white Ivy League school. The main focus is on a mixed race activist named Sam who begins a radio show called Dear White People, addressing racism that occurs regularly at her college. Her radio show stirs up race issues within the school and causes backlash from the Dean and President of the school. To get back at Sam, a fraternity throws a "black face" Halloween party. This stirs up even more drama and lands the college on the national news.

Coming-of-age movies like "Dear White People" often come around and change the way people think. A movie like this is intended to cause a reaction, make people think about their actions, and how they impact others. A major issue people had with the movie is that it is racist, and if there was a "Dear Black People", problems would arise. When someone asks Sam, "How would you like if someone made a Dear Black People?" Sam informs him that there's no need because media outlets like Fox News have already made it clear how white America feels about black America. For instance, look at TV shows and movies where black and Hispanic actors almost exclusively play roles depicting thugs or criminals. Just look at the way the whole Ferguson situation was displayed versus the Pumpkin Fest riots. You might not have heard much about the Pumpkin Fest riots but it was a series of vandalism that took place in a college town in Keene, New Hampshire after a night of heavy drinking. Students flipped over cars and set parts of the town ablaze for no good reason other than the fact that they wanted to. You're probably familiar with the whole situation in Ferguson and the protests because death of teen Mike Brown at the hands of police. These were largely peaceful protests that the police overreacted to in their approach to control the situation.

The police reacted to the situation in Keene the same way because the students were intoxicated and destructive. The drastic difference between the situations was the media coverage. The Ferguson protests were held predominantly by black protesters, while the Pumpkin Fest riots included mostly white students. The students were described as "rowdy", "mischievous", and "revelers." where the situation was made to seem like some college kids had too much to drink and things just got out of hand. Instead of what really happened-- students were rioting for no reason and they caused thousands of dollars in property damage. The protesters in Ferguson were described as "thugs" and "rioters", and were made to seem like they were being a menace, causing turmoil, and ruining their town. They were just exercising their first amendment rights and trying to get justice.

These are subtle differences in the media that often go unnoticed, and movies like "Dear White People" try to shed light on them. They are instances of institutionalized racism that affects African-Americans on a daily basis but they aren't blatantly obvious. In the movie, when the "black face" party was thrown, attendees were encouraged to wear big t-shirts, sagging jeans, and gold chains. Girls were told to wear their most ghetto black girl outfits and to be rowdy. Events like these seem uncommon, but the inspiration for this portion of the film is actually taken from real events that occurred at the Chapman University in Orange County, CA. They held a party called the Compton Cookout where white students dressed like black people, ate watermelon and fried chicken, and drank Kool-Aid. These ideas and perceptions of African-Americans are often based on the views and portrayals in the media. News outlets depict people in a certain way. If viewers see only blacks as criminals and thugs on TV, then our views reflect that stereotype.

The Redskins & the History of Racist Team Names

Thomas Henderson

Over the summer, the Washington Redskins football team was all over the news, and not for anything football related. The Redskins were under intense fire in regards to their name and multiple Native American tribes have called for a change. Over the summer, petitions were created and signed to cease the trademarks of the Redskin name, and the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board branch of the United States Patent and Trademark Office decided to cancel all of the federal trademark registrations. The reasoning behind this is that many Native American peoples feel that the name is racist, and they are offended by the name. This wasn't the first time that this problem has come to light either. In 1992 the original petition was created, and it wasn't settled until 2005, resulting in a loss for Native Americans.

The team in Washington has used multiple logos over the years. One was a spear with a feather, one is simply an "R". The one that is deeply involved in controversy is their current logo, the Native American man with a feather attached. Neither the logo or the name are appreciated by Native Americans due to its controversial look.

Scholars often debate the original racial tendencies behind the name. Some scholars see it as inherently racist and mean hearted, and others see it as how Europeans differentiated every type of people, often saying "white man" and "red man" in their writing.

The Washington Redskins often take the brunt of the Native American fight against racism, but there are other professional and collegiate instances of racism. The logo of the Cleveland Indians is extremely offensive, and is named Chief Wahoo. Although it is used less than it used to be, the "Tribe" faithful support him and wear him often. The Florida State Seminoles and the Atlanta Braves both use the tomahawk chop and chant alongside it. The Florida State Seminoles have a similar logo to the Washington Redskin, besides the lack of red skin.

There are, however, positive instances of Native American logos in athletics. The aforementioned Atlanta Braves baseball team and Florida State Seminoles are instances of that, outside of the use of the tomahawk chop and chant. The Seminoles are a proud tribe originating from Florida, so there are roots between the two. The Atlanta Braves simply use an "A" as their logo with a tomahawk, a weapon commonly used by Native Americans, as the horizontal line. They used to have a Native American man as their logo, but it was changed years ago. The Chicago Blackhawks, a NHL hockey team, is named after the original owner's military unit, the Blackhawks, but use a logo similar to the Redskins, without the red skin.

The Washington Redskins owners have stood by the name for as long as there has been debate over it. Current owner Daniel Snyder has consistently put himself on the wrong side of history by saying multiple times that the team is simply not changing the name because he feels as though it isn't racist. The St. John's University Red Storm, here in New York City, changed their name before the 1994 season from the Redmen, due to the racist interpretation it gave off. What's so different from the Redskins and the Redmen? Not much.

Barbie™: Causing Body Issues Since 1959

Kristina Hernandez

Photo via Sports Illustrated

Women get a lot of criticism for being too "bossy," too "uptight," or too "sensitive." What women appear to get the most criticism for, however, is being too "body conscious." There are people who cannot, or choose not to, see the pressure that the media puts on girls and young women to be perky and flawless. Most girls get exposed to this as soon as they are born. One of the first gifts I remember getting as a child was a dazzling brand new Barbie™ doll.

It was not until much later that I saw the bigger issue with Barbie™: that her proportions are incredibly off! Human Barbie would stand at 5'9" tall, weighing 110 pounds with a Body Mass Index that would qualify her as severely anorexic, a bust size of 39 inches, waist of 18 inches, and shoe size of 3. She would be on all fours due to her proportions. Granted that young girls do not notice these details, but they do notice that Barbie™ has no pores, does not have a bump on the bridge of her nose, her teeth are perfectly white, and she looks fabulous in anything she wears.

In recent years, the profits that Barbie™ has brought Mattel have steadily dropped. In an attempt to keep her relevant, Mattel partnered with Sports Illustrated in February 2014 to create a special, limited-edition swimsuit edition of the magazine. Barbie™ is dubbed "The Doll That Started It All" as a nod to Sports Illustrated's swimsuit edition that has featured popular veteran models Christie Brinkley, Elle MacPherson, and Tyra Banks. The mission was simple: show readers and women that Barbie™ is still relevant and that she is "#Unapologetic." This is extremely easy for the company to do when Barbie™ has nothing to be apologetic for. How can she? She is perfect and fake. The cover features Barbie™ in her debut outfit, sending the message that Mattel will not be updating her look anytime soon.

Sports Illustrated, a company that receives plenty of criticism for promoting an unhealthy body image, was under more fire than usual this past February, when its swimsuit issue was said to not only make you feel bad, "but your daughters too!" by a Mommy Blog. Supporters of the cover have argued that Barbie™ is perhaps the most feminist doll on the market because compared to her Bratz and Monster High companions, Barbie™ is tame, and the brand does not feature sexualized pre-pubescent girls with revealing clothing and heavy make-up. Barbie has broken more glass ceilings in her 55 years than some women do in their entire life.

Nonetheless, is all of this supposed to excuse the unrealistic body image that she gives to young girls? There is evidence to support that girls get their attitudes about body images from their mothers, but a mother's advice and influence only goes so far, especially for a pre-teen. Teenage years are the age to shed your Barbie™ and start noticing that you do not have the flawless hair you grew up grooming, the poreless face, or hourglass figure. Mattel is upset with the dip in sales, yet refuses to update Barbie™. If the majority of society realizes that she is not an acceptable body image role model for girls and young women, then Mattel should probably take the hint if they want their sales to go up. Barbie™ represents a half-century of tradition, but just because things have always been that way does not mean they have to stay that way.

Twitter Now Suing the Government

Adriana DiBenedetto

So, it seems that Twitter is suing the United States government.

I'm sure that by now, many people have heard of this, but a lot of people are confused about the who-what-why-how of it all. We'll start with this one: What even started all this?

Apparently, this can be traced back to Edward Snowden. You know, that ex-NSA contractor who leaked a bunch of classified documents, and by extension, the PRISM surveillance program? Because of this program, companies like Twitter, Microsoft, and Google are put in the position of handing over private user information and not being able to tell anyone about it, as revealing any information could potentially jeopardize their investigation. The tech company will be given a request for information on a certain individual, or group of individuals, who may be treated as suspected terrorists, for example, and then says, "but don't tell anyone. It's on the hush-hush!"

> Twitter says that their First Amendment rights are being impinged by this transparency gap.

Twitter doesn't like the lack of transparency, and unlike Microsoft, Facebook, Apple, and LinkedIn, they decided not to settle with the government, only being able to release vague numbers like 'we may have gotten zero to 999 requests this time.' Twitter says that their First Amendment rights are being impinged by this transparency gap.

Many Twitter users were made uneasy by this potential to be probed and have their privacy invaded, and Twitter wanted to do something to ease their worries. Back in April, Twitter offered to post a transparency report stating how many requests were made by the government, which they were then told they were not allowed to do. Being a social networking platform where the posts are public, Twitter does not appear to receive as many requests as other sites, but Twitter's vice president Ben Lee says that it's still a big issue. In a blog post he writes that, "It's our belief that we are entitled under the First Amendment to respond to our users, concerns and to the statements of U.S. government officials by providing information about the scope of U.S. government surveillance -- including what types of legal process have not been received. We should be free to do this in a meaningful way, rather than in broad, inexact ranges."

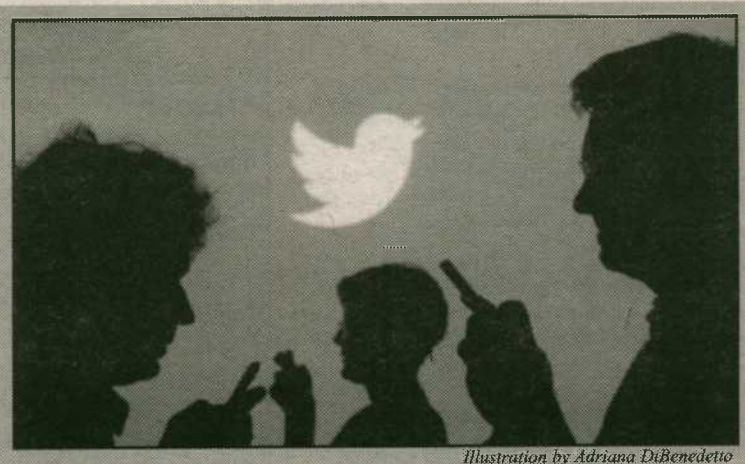


Illustration by Adriana DiBenedetto

Michael Cuddyer and What He Means to the Mets

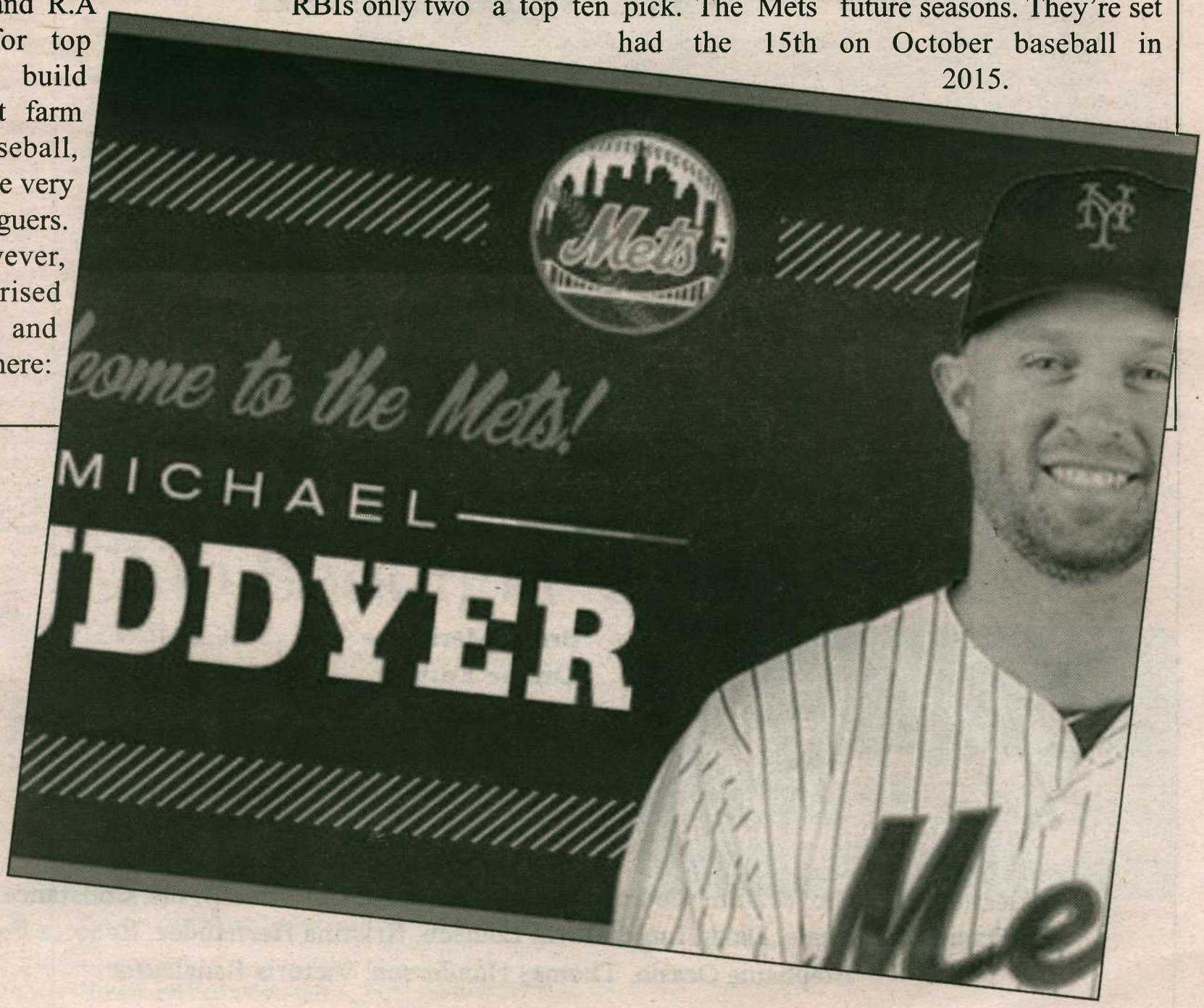
Thomas Henderson

I've been a Mets fan since birth. My parents followed them since their inception. It's in my blood, and I bleed blue and orange. Year after year, since the collapse of 2007, I have watched them rebuild, and wait. The fans were constantly waiting for next year, and last year seemed to be the start. The prospects we were waiting for finally came to the majors, and built one of the formidable, great young rotations and bullpens in baseball, even without their ace Matt Harvey who will be ready for spring training in 2015. With solid drafting, and by trading veterans such as Carlos Beltran and R.A Dickey high for top prospects, they build one of the best farm systems in baseball, who have become very solid major leaguers. This year, however, the Mets surprised baseball fans and experts everywhere: GM Sandy Alderson was aggressive for the first time in a long time. As soon as the Mets could, they signed corner outfielder Michael Cuddyer to a two year $21 million deal.

Cuddyer, who will be 36 by the start of the season, fills a hole for the team. He's a corner outfielder (who will most likely play right field because he is deaf in his left ear), and can play first base against lefties. He has had his share of injuries, but when he's healthy he is a very solid offensive player, and a very okay (to be generous) defensive player. He can still perform at his advanced age, hitting .311 with 20 home runs and 84 RBIs only two years ago to win his first batting title with Colorado.

Cuddyer, a career .279 hitter with a .347 OBP for the Minnesota Twins and the Colorado Rockies is an important signing, and shows how the Mets will treat this offseason because he had a qualifying offer offered to him by the Rockies. A qualifying offer is an industry-standard 1-year offer that is given to a free agent player by the team he played for the previous season. This particular offer, the value of which is set this offseason at $15.3 million this season, allows the team to receive a first round draft pick if the player signs with another team, unless that team has a top ten pick. The Mets had the 15th pick in this year's draft, and it now belongs to the Rockies.

That is the most important part of this deal. GM Sandy Alderson, who has hung onto first round draft picks for dear life since he became the GM for the team, decided that this pick was not important, because the time to win is now. There is no more waiting for next season, no more wanting to build through the draft. Last year, the Mets signed Curtis Granderson, but the risk was minimal with their first pick being protected. This year, however, the Mets were willing to part with a precious first round pick. Why? Because their sights are not set on future seasons. They're set on October baseball in 2015.



Graceful Living: An Advice Column for Life's Journey

Dear Grace,

I hope not to sound like a typical girl with this but I don't know where else to turn to. My boyfriend and I have been together for three years but these past few months have been really rocky. He doesn't do things for me like good boyfriends do. He'll only buy me gifts on holidays; he's so busy with school that he barely works-- meaning we never go out anymore. I'm getting bored. I don't want to let go of three years of my life but he isn't doing the things he should be to keep me around. Help…

To Typical Girl that is trying not to sound like a typical girl, you sound like a typical girl. As always, I mean everything I say with limitless love and desire for your betterment. Do not find insult in my words, for they are only here to help you with internal growth. Right now, at this point in your life, you are in a purgatory of emotions. You are entering your last few stages of adolescents and are going to soon be welcoming the reality of adulthood. With that being said, you are forgetting that for your boyfriend, he too is trying to pave the way for a brighter future. Education is key. If your boyfriend is cutting some hours at work in order to place a bigger focus on his education, you should be supporting him in every possible way. What your boyfriend is doing right now is going to essentially enable him to shower you with everything and anything you may want in the future… You just need to be willing to stick through him during this period of hard work.

Although going out is extremely important in a relationship, you do not need money to make that happen. Go to the park, go for a walk, go for a bike ride… You should be able to lay down with your partner and talk about life until the sun comes up. Discuss your fears, your insecurities, and your passions… Talk about politics, religion, and society. You need to grow together, and if you are mentally on two different pages, you will only grow apart. Instead of telling your boyfriend that you want him to buy you gifts, tell him that you want him to show you things that remind him of you: a flower, a book, an article, a song, a street, a poem, a pack of your favorite gum, a bar of your favorite chocolate, etc. Not a Michael Kors watch. Fight for your relationship. He needs to make changes, but so do you.

Dear Grace,

Dear Grace,

I am at that point in my life where I feel like I should stop holding grudges. I have made a lot of mistakes, but other people have wronged me too. I want to come to peace with my past but it's just so difficult for me to forget about situations that hurt me.

To the Grudge,

I feel like everywhere I turn lately I am inundated by the principle of forgiveness. Whether it is church sermons or the quote on my damn tea bags, the advocacy of forgiving is rampant. An old African proverb reads, "He who forgives, ends the quarrel." Forgiveness in terms of pluralism is among the easiest of its kind. Internal forgiveness, however, is where the true struggles lay.

Peace within oneself is is absolutely crucial for personal growth and self-betterment. We need to let it go. This may be very 2005 and of me to say, but mistakes and experiences teach us those life lessons and virtues that no other teacher or tool of intellect ever possibly could.

Accept the fact that everyone messes up. Even you. What too many people are guilty of doing is judging others simply on the nature of their actions, without taking into consideration the underlying reasoning behind them. Stop looking at what someone did, and start asking yourself why it was done to begin with.

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